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What Others Say

CIA and Foreign Policy

Sen. Fulbright's concern over the Central Intelligence Agency's burgeoning role in the making of foreign policy appears to be warranted.

As the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman said on "Meet the Press," the CIA is "supposed to be an intelligence agency only, and not an operating agency in the execution of foreign policy." The occasional, accidental impingement of the CIA on foreign policy-making is, of course, inevitable. Espionage is necessary. It is a risky business; now and then a spy will be caught, a U2 plane shot down, a delicate job bungled. These events have their effect upon the course of foreign relations.

But Fulbright is saying more than that. He is saying that the CIA appears to be usurping some of the State Department's advisory functions. He is suggesting that it took over some such functions with regard to the Bay of Pigs, the Dominican Republic intervention, and on a continuing basis in the Viet Nam war. If this is the case, one may assume the CIA's advice has also been sought, and taken, in other matters.

The New York Herald Tribune reports that President Johnson plans to assign the Federal Bureau of Investigation a portion of the foreign investigative work heretofore done by the CIA. The White House denies the story, but it is the kind of story that is generally denied, whether it is true or not.

If the FBI is indeed to be rung in because the CIA came up with some embarassingly wrong answers, that would be a practical decision but still not a solution going to the heart of the problem.

The chief danger, as Fulbright suggests, is not that errors will occasionally be made, but that police agencies—the CIA, the FBI, and the Pentagon—will control the great decisions that determine the role of the United States in the world. Policemen, however excellent they may be at their police jobs, are notoriously unsuited for that kind of policy determination.—Chicago News.